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SUBJECT KGB

JOEL SPIVAK: And now let me introduce you to Dr. William R. Corson (?), who -- well, Dr. Corson is an ex-Marine. He's been involved with intelligence matters for -- between he and his colleague Robert Crowley, they have probably about 70 years experience in the intelligence business. And they wrote a book, which is published by Morrow, called The New KGB: Engine of Soviet Power. It's a very scholarly book, but it is full of information.

I was sitting in my office today reading this book, and right away the first thing that jumped out at me, Dr. Corson, was the shooting of the Pope and what, if anything, the KGB had to do with it.

First of all, do you believe that the KGB had something to do with it?

WILLIAM CORSON: Oh, indeed. Yes, Joel. The facts are pretty clear. What we did in the book was to insure to use a parallel. And, you know, we're not going to come up with this is the new piece of proof and there's this trial underway which is part of a legal rain dance in Italian jurisprudence -- is the fact that we think of His Holiness as a leader. And he is. Twenty-two percent of the American public are Catholics. But that's not the perception within the framework of the KGB. He's a charismatic leader of Poland. And the history of relationships between Poland and Russia, that go back 300 years, is that periodically the Poles get angry and kick the living bejesus out of the Russians. And they know that.

And we talked about Sikorski, the murder of General Sikorski by the Soviet secret police, with the connivance of

Philby. Now, Sikorski was the intellectual superior, as well as moral and so forth superior, of Charles de Gaulle. He was also -- he, Sikorski, was the President of the Republic of Poland, was in England at the time. And Stalin had to kill Sikorski because the notion of Sikorski coming in to Warsaw at the end of the war with the victorious Polish Free Army led by General Anders, they couldn't tolerate it. No more could they tolerate the fact of His Holiness taking off his collar and returning to become a leader in Poland, or Walesa. So you kill him.

And you say, "Well, he's the head of the Catholic Church." The Bolsheviks don't accept that as being relevant. The criteria is a potential charismatic leader that can cause problems. That's why.

SPIVAK: Well, you know, I happen to agree with you. I mean just -- I do. I really think that they're behind it. But I'm not in the intelligence business. And yet I do not hear, I do not hear a big outcry either in this country or any place else, not even in Italy, about the possibility that Chernenko and Andropov and all of those people could have ordered the murder of the head of the Roman Catholic Church and gotten away with it. Thank God he wasn't murdered. He was shot and he's okay. But I mean the thought of it is so mind-boggling that I guess people just can't even comprehend it.

CORSON: Well, because of their feelings towards His Holiness. But I'm saying to you that that's not the relevant consideration.

SPIVAK: Not for the KGB.

CORSON: Not for the KGB.

And Andropov, before he became Chairman, had the responsibility, before he became Chairman, of establishing the multinational nature of the KGB. And he took the various surrogates -- or not surrogates, but the Warsaw Pact states and the others, to include the Bulgarians, the Czechs, the Poles, the Hungarians; and the best analogy, or the best analogy I can give you, is that the KGB is a multinational organization. It is not a combination FBI and CIA. That's a Soviet disinformation ploy. It's a multinational organization with functional distribution assigned.

Wet operations [foreign expression] are assigned to the Bulgarians. Bulgarians like to kill people, and they're pretty good at it. And so you give that assignment to Bulgarians.

The Czechs deal with high tech. The Poles deal with high tech in industrial processes. And the East Germans deal with high tech in the field of electronics.

It's all very well organized. It's the IT&I, if you will, of this operation.

SPIVAK: Are they that good?

CORSON: They are that good. They are that good, Joel.

SPIVAK: Well, then explain to me why this guy Agca, the Turk who the Italians arrested for shooting the Pope, is doing this insane number in the courtroom. That looks to me like a put-up job.

CORSON: Well, what it is, if you've ever observed a criminal trial in Italy, this is part of a rain dance of plea bargaining. And what Agca is saying, "Look, I am the prosecution's star witness. Without me, you get nothing."

Now, what does Agca want? He knows he isn't going to get a pardon, and he's not going to get executive clemency. "But I do want my own little cell, TV, writing paper, maybe a conjugal visit or something thrown in from time to time. And above all, I want protection. Now, unless you promise that, I'm going to get up there make some of these statements."

I've sat in Italian courtrooms on some of the so-called espionage cases in Naples, as in Turin, and you're saying, "Wait a minute. This guy can't remember his name," literally. And that's what this is all about. And it's part of, "All right. Let's break and we'll talk it over. Do you want a queen-sized or a king-sized bed." I mean that's what they're diddling around with.

SPIVAK: All right. But there's no doubt in your mind that they KGB ordered the shooting of the Pope.

CORSON: None whatsoever. I mean the aspect -- not proof by analogy, but the Sikorski case. And you say, "How important was Sikorski?"

SPIVAK: Look, Sikorski was a long time ago. This is now. And just by making that utterance, I say to you that you and Claire Sterling and Marvin Kalb and a lot of others who went out on a limb on this one before there were any charges brought against the Russians were immediately labeled as wackos.

CORSON: That's right.

SPIVAK: For even intimating that the Russians might have had anything to do with that.

CORSON: I am hopeful. There's been a defection within

the last week in Athens of a KGB guy, and his name has still not been released. If this case isn't badly handled, we may have our assertive witness from within the organs to say, "Yes, it was done, because I was back there at headquarters when this decision was made."

SPIVAK: Really?

CORSON: Yeah. We think so. We think so.

SPIVAK: Boy, that would be a bombshell, wouldn't it?

CORSON: It would be. And, you know, I think it will still much of this view.

But I recall when Claire Sterling was going off on this. And you see, Claire hitherto had been considered to be something of a left -- not a left-winger, but she was liberal. And what was happening, with her critical faculties, she could not ignore the evidence that she was collecting. And she did, I think, a first-class job in laying it out.

SPIVAK: This book I got sitting right here has all kinds of wondrous tales to tell about the KGB, not the least of which is a little anecdote here about Dr. Edward Teller, who is right across the bay here in Berkeley. Dr. Teller has been depicted over the years as being a rather right-wing fellow. And Dr. Teller is one of the inventors of the H-bomb and has been very outspoken in his opposition to the Soviets, and things like that. And you made a rather startling assertion in this book about Dr. Teller. I got the impression that you and Mr. Crowley think that the reason Dr. Teller's been depicted that way is because he is anti-Soviet.

CORSON: That's right. It works. I mean you label him as being a little bit extreme -- see, not too long ago, Joel, I spoke to a high school class up in Gaithersburg, a senior high school group. A youngster asked me, said, "Colonel, should we be afraid of the KGB?"

And I said, "No. We should be informed." Because if you're informed of what they're doing, how they're doing it, why they're doing it, then you can support coherent methods to contain this.

Apropos of things in this area, not too long ago I did a television program for CNN and there was a man in the Soviet Embassy by the name of Vladimir Bersitzyn (?).

SPIVAK: The Soviet Embasssy in Washington.

CORSON: Yes, in Washington -- who heard about this book

and had to get ahold of a copy of the galleys, and was very -- you know, "We've got to have it," and, you know, "these anti-Soviet tirades," etcetera, etcetera.

So we did a 180 on Vladimir and we found that he had spent the preceding four years here at Berkeley studying nuclear science and advanced electronic theory. He is now the third man in the Public Information Office in the Soviet Union.

Well, we put him on camera, hidden camera, body mike. And he's had a little bit of difficulty in explaining to Androsov -- I have a picture in there of Androsov. And Stanislav can't figure how I got that picture of him. We've fuzzed it up. He's the resident.

But Vladimir, after four years studying at that level, one of the better schools in the United States, has come back there. And his job, I believe -- and I'm getting a few converts in the Bureau who say, "Well, you may be right, Willie" -- is there to coordinate the scientific and technical intelligence collection on SDI research.

Because, as you may know, probably more than half...

SPIVAK: SDI is the Star Wars.

CORSON: ...Star Wars, or the Strategic Defense Initiative, research will take place within the Beltway. And you got to have somebody there that knows the difference between a kilocycle and a megacycle and a pedacycle.

SPIVAK: See, I have a feeling that people who are listening to this are thinking to themselves, "Oh, come on. So what?"

You know, in this country, it's still true, the CIA is probably people think -- you know, hate the CIA more than they do the KGB. And you know, it was a great revelation to me when I went to Washington and got to know a few people in the intelligence community and came to find out that the KGB operates in Washington, the capital of the Free World, with such impunity that they openly attend congressional hearings, they go get documents anytime they want from our government. They are even waved at by members of Congress and members of the Senate in the hearing rooms.

I mean it's hard for me to imagine that our intelligence people in the Soviet Union, or anywhere else in the world, are treated that way.

CORSON: One thing we did, what we did in this film, and

I said, you know, it's time to attempt to let people know what's going on.

You know where 1500 Massachusetts Avenue is, and that's Thomas Circle. There's an apartment building that's located there, and the Canadian Embassy is on...

[Technical difficulties]

CORSON: ...assigned to the embassy, which was right around the corner and down the street. There are nine Russians living in 1500.

Now, what is their job? What do they do? Master Bowes, tell me what they do.

SPIVAK: What do they do?

CORSON: They are the night crawlers. They come out after dark -- and they're very good tenants. They pay their bills on time and they're very quiet and they pay in cash. And they come out at night every night and they cruise the gay bars and the singles bars in Washington looking for young people who are vulnerable, might have a drug problem, might have a problem that they like cats and dogs rather than boys and girls. "But whatever you want, we'll get it for you."

SPIVAK: Well, you know what amazes me? Here you are telling me that this is a well-known fact in Washington, that the KGB is doing this right in the capital of the Free World. Why don't we throw them out? Why don't we just tell those guys to get lost?

CORSON: Well, I use this metaphor. In 1972, I'm convinced that Mr. Nixon and Dr. Kissinger saw Yul Brynner in "The King and I" once too many times. And they believed that getting to know you and getting to know all about you, and they promoted detente.

You have right now in this Bay Area 750 Soviet espionage officers, right now. Since '72 the number of Soviet legal espionage people have increased by two factors of magnitude. In real terms, the number of FBI agents committed to counterintelligence have declined.

SPIVAK: Yeah. All right. Stop right there.

We'll get right back to this with Dr. William Corson here in just a few moments.

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SPIVAK: Our guest is Dr. William R. Corson, or Colonel Corson, whichever he prefers. He and his partner Robert Crowley have written a very scholarly book about the KGB.

Now, he just started to tell me something about the numbers of KGB operatives here in San Francisco. And the number -- what figure did you have there?

CORSON: It's better than 700; 7, 750, in that general area.

SPIVAK: How do you know?

CORSON: We track those kind of things, and our friends in the Bureau that we try to help provide us with confirmation. Although this might sound really way off the boards, Joel, it isn't. A reasonably conservative estimate of the Soviets that are -- and these are ones that we're pretty sure of -- nationwide, is 14,000.

SPIVAK: Fourteen thousand KGB?

CORSON: Well, just as you know in the CIA you have somebody's a contract guy, I'm talking about the multinationals, the Poles and the Bulgarians and the Hungarians, and so forth. And you find just this recent case down in Los Angeles, the Ogarodnikovs. Well, who do they belong to? Well, actually they belong to the KGB.

SPIVAK: Yeah.

Well, let's assume that there are 700 KGB operatives in this area, including people working out of the consulate here on Green Street and everybody else. Most of their attention, obviously, is going to be directed at the Silicon Valley, isn't it?

CORSON: That's precisely what they're after. And they want to get vulnerable engineers or people that are having trouble meeting their payroll. And how do they find this out? Well, one mechanic, one method that they used before -- and I'm sure that they have an alternative -- was with the Walker case. Walker had a man inside the police department in Norfolk, which enabled him to plug into the FBI's rap, get all the police department information, plug into the credit card system, so you know whether a guy's got the full disaster, he's overdrawn at the bank, whether he's got a sweetie on the side. These things are there.

SPIVAK: Whether he's doing drugs, stuff like that?

CORSON: Whatever. Whatever you've got, they can get it

for you.

SPIVAK: So what do they do? They send these guys down to Silicon Valley, down around Sunnyvale and stuff, and they hang out in bars and stuff like that?

CORSON: Yeah. They'll go and they'll listen to somebody. And they'll have a trade representation. Maybe I'm with the POLAMCO, the Polish-American Company, and I'll look at your factory. And it goes on.

Well, we'd love to have you back in Washington, but I can understand your moving to this area. But there are 20 Soviet trade representatives in Washington. And you say, "Twenty trade representatives? What are they buying?" Because all the Russians buy from us is \$50 million worth of Scotch tape. Everything else is government-to-government. There isn't any trade.

These 20 guys work -- and I'm not sure where they live. I am -- but they work at 2001 Connecticut Avenue. That's the old Lothrop mansion. You've driven by it many times, one of the most beautiful buildings in Washington, right above the Hilton Hotel, where the President was shot by Hinckley, or shot at by Hinckley. There are 20 of them that are in there. And what do they do to earn their bread and cheese? They listen to Bill Corson's telephone calls. This is where they intercept and monitor the long-distance phone calls. And they've got line of sight right down to the White House, and they get 456, the White House exchange, and then the Old Executive Office Building, 395, and they pick all this stuff up.

Now, here it comes -- I'll give you the mechanics of it. And then at 4:32 in the afternoon Eastern Standard Time, the Soviet spy satellite goes over Washington. And they press the button and it goes putt, and it goes up to the spy satellite. The spy satellite goes over Moscow. They press the other button, it goes putt, down to the center, Lyubianka or the out center.

All right. Now we've got all this is on tape. Now we got to figure out which of all these thousands and millions of long-distance phone calls we want to listen to. So we have a CAT scanner, very similar to the one in your Cadillac or your Mercedes, where you press it and it searches out till it finds the radio station. This particular scanner device is programmed to listen to a conversation that comes up and I say, "Pentagon, CIA, KC, Dumbo, Doder," or, "Standstill burner," and, bingo, it stops on that word. And then, okay, that particular...

SPIVAK: You mean the Russians have this.

CORSON: Yeah. Now, where did they get the equipment?

SPIVAK: From the Silicon Valley?

CORSON: They got it from Johnny Walker Red Label, who made sure that the appropriate guys got it to him.

See, this is our technology.

SPIVAK: Johnny Walker Red Label, meaning they went out and got somebody drunk and...

CORSON: No. That's my shorthand -- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to speak jargon. I thought you were still back in Washington. This is John Walker, who is currently charged with...

SPIVAK: Oh, that John Walker. Oh, yeah, sure. This is the guy who was -- okay. When you say Johnny Walker Red Label...

CORSON: How can you keep all these guys -- yeah, I have trouble keeping all these guys straight.

SPIVAK: The spy. Yeah.

Well, no, but come back here. Because I'm absolutely fascinated that our intelligence community, the FBI, the CIA, everybody knows that over here on Green Street they've got all these guys working the Silicon Valley and all the big think tanks around here, and it just goes on.

CORSON: Well, I'd say this to you. The number of full-time FBI agents that are committed to trying to look at this horde -- don't say it on the air -- that's all.

SPIVAK: Wait a minute.

CORSON: But you know, those who go...

SPIVAK: Are you kidding me?

CORSON: I might tease you, but I wouldn't kid you. You saved my life in Washington by keeping me from driving my car into a ditch. No.

SPIVAK: Are you kidding me? I am not going to -- you know, you asked me not to say how many agents, so I won't. You know that to be true?

CORSON: Yeah. That's the size of this field office, of the people in this field office that are committed to that exercise.

SPIVAK: You're talking about counterintelligence people?

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CORSON: Yeah.

Joel, remember the movie "Graduate"?

SPIVAK: Yeah.

CORSON: There's a big line -- it's one word. You know, it'll live forever. Dustin Hoffman comes to a guy, says to him...

SPIVAK: "Plastics."

CORSON: "Plastics."

SPIVAK: Yeah.

CORSON: And the FBI, you come out and you're a hard-charging guy, you come out of the academy. You know, the first word is "organized crime." That's where the promotions are and that's where the rewards are, and you better go there.

Okay. If you can make it, you get in there, because, you know, the competition's pretty severe.

The second category is drugs. Boy, Mr. Hoover was wise enough to keep people from going off there because it takes so many people. It's labor-extensive. And the temptations. It's not five grand from a crooked bank examiner, it's 50 million.

SPIVAK: Well, where on the priority list is the KGB?

CORSON: Now -- now let's come down the line. The next priority is go into counterterrorism, because no one can define it. It's like detente: I'll know it when I see it. And so, as you know, today there's a cottage industry, and let's get a grant and study counterterrorism.

The fourth priority is counterintelligence. Now, why would anybody ask to go into counterintelligence?

Sometimes -- and there are cases that Bob and I had worked at. Not to go into a specific case -- sometimes these cases take eight years. And your supervisor is saying, "Crowley," or Corson, "when the hell are you going to bring these guys in?"

"Well, we've got to get the goods. You know, we just don't want to arrest him and have him walk out the door."

SPIVAK: So, in the meantime, they're stealing us blind.

CORSON: That's right. And the commitment of the

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people -- and as I say, the absolute numbers, it overwhelms.

I had an individual that I -- I suggested to this individual, who works on classified material and had a hand put on his knee by the Soviets. This individual had won a two-week all-paid vacation trip to come to the Soviet Union because he was a subscriber to Soviet Life. And he went in and reported this fact. And the Bureau -- this is not putting the Bureau down. The Bureau said, "Wait a minute. No crime has taken place. There's nothing overt that's involved. And we've got a lot of other things on our mind."

Here's a sensitive American. Maybe you can make him into an agent for you. Maybe he can go and do something for you. But the guys are overwhelmed.

We fingered this guy Bersitzyn, who's now coordinating this other thing, was here for four years at Berkeley. Who else did he recruit while he was here? And then we fingered in this -- when we were making this film, just by accident, two Soviets with the SX license plate. They got out and they dropped a piece of paper out their pocket, they were in a hurry. And it was a personnel action report for the Secret Service. It was not a classified document that you could nail them on the espionage statute, but it had names on it that identified people who you'd never find out if you walked in -- walked in the Secret Service headquarters in Los Angeles.

SPIVAK: All right. Stop right there.

Well, Dr. Corson obviously feels rather strongly about this. This book, incidentally, is called The New KGB, by William Corson and Robert Crowley, and it's published by Morrow. And we'll continue in a moment.

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SPIVAK: We're visiting here with Dr. William R. Corson, who along with his colleague Robert Crowley wrote, I think, a very scholarly book about the KGB called The New KGB: Engine of Soviet Power.

I was a little surprised at the title. I mean why "the New KGB"? Is it so much different from the old KGB?

CORSON: Yeah.

SPIVAK: It is?

CORSON: What we had to do, the history is the connective tissue, Joel. And you might say that this is taking the DNA

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chain, and how did it come to the form that it's in? If you don't understand what happened yesterday, you don't really understand today's news.

SPIVAK: Well, you take it from the beginning.

CORSON: You have to, because the principles and the concepts evolve.

As I mentioned about Andropov running the multinational, getting that. Then when he became Chairman, he realized -- he was 67 -- he realized that the party was so corrupt -- and they were corrupt to the point -- and corruption is endemic in Russian society. But they were unlike -- no analogies intended, pejorative -- Mayor Daley in Chicago, where I grew up, the city that works. It's all right to be corrupt, but you've got to make the trains run on time. And they weren't doing it. The party wasn't doing that.

So what he did, Andropov was an ascetic and an idealist, believing in the Dzershinsky principles. So he began to select people, and he selected Mikhail Gorbachev: You are going to take over as the General Secretary. And Viktor Chebrikov, and he will become the head of the KGB. And Viktor had been -- he had been Andropov's deputy in Hungary when they pulled off one of the greatest intelligence coups of all time, infiltrating into the United States hundreds and hundreds of agents. And then Vitaly Fedorchuk, who becomes the head of the NVD. And Andropov accomplished in seven months what took Stalin seven years to do. And Lagachov (?). And these are the new eagles.

SPIVAK: These are names that, frankly -- I know Andropov and I know Chernenko and I know the current man, Gorbachev. But -- you know, these other names.

CORSON: They're there. We describe them and what they've done.

SPIVAK: I know. I've seen them in the book.

CORSON: Now, what was done, Andropov knew that he was ill, and they realized that they needed time to take care of one very important function, and that was to clean up their overseas act, their missions overseas, because the corruption was not producing the results. So -- and they couldn't throw Anatoly Dobrynin out overnight. They had to move with care.

So they put Chernenko on the throne and they said, "Konstantine, you stand there and you can smoke your cigarettes. But shut up. And here is what we're going to say in order to keep you shut-up."

Published in Pravda, this full-page bill of particulars of the graft in Moldavia. And all you had to do was plug Konstaine in there and you go to jail. You go right to the Gulag and don't pass Go.

All right. During that period of time they started to replace the worst of the worst among their foreign service group.

SPIVAK: I think what I hear you telling me is that the KGB is running the Soviet government.

CORSON: They are the Soviet government. There was no way that these men could be advanced to the full Politburo status. It just happened.

Now, to give you a -- to make it precise, the Ambassador to Greece, the Soviet Ambassador to Greece was replaced by Igor Andropov, Yuri's son. And then they brought in first team, and they have a definite mission. Greece is part of the Soviet design. Greece is going to be out of NATO, probably within two years. And they are moving there, and it's designed, and whatever causes trouble and what facilitates making sure that Papandreou stays with that particular commitment.

One should realize, if you've flown out of the Athens airport...

SPIVAK: I don't want to fly out of the Athens airport, not after what happened.

CORSON: The U.S. Air Force station is contiguous to the Athens airport. And one of the things that you'll find, you'll say, "Wait a minute. What is the KGB doing in Greece?" And that's a very precise question.

SPIVAK: What are they doing?

CORSON: Well, they're suborning U.S. military presence. And the story -- this occurred in March. There was a bar in Athens that was frequented by the men who manned one of our most sensitive listening posts, and it was a farewell party for a young man who was going home to the States. Some of the most highly qualified U.S. communications intelligence technicians. And the KGB blew up the bar and killed 23 Americans. It was barely a tag-line story in the U.S.

SPIVAK: Well, you're telling me something I didn't know, because I don't even remember hearing about it.

CORSON: There was some footage, and let's go back to the Roloids ad.

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SPIVAK: That was it, huh?

CORSON: Yeah.

SPIVAK: Well, if you want to learn about these people, I suppose you can read this book. I'll tell you, it absolutely fascinates me.

What really fascinates me, frankly, Dr. Corson, is how little people in this country really care.

CORSON: I had a high school kid say to me, "Should I be afraid?"

And I said, "No. Be informed."

And one of the reasons -- I don't do windows anymore. This going on a book tour and traveling from here to there and everywhere. I believe, Joel, seriously, that the American public is two light-years ahead of every elected representative and every appointed official on this issue. They're ready to support a coherent policy. And their sense of betrayal and outrage vis-a-vis the Walker case, they're not overreacting. They're saying, "Wait a minute. We better understand this. We better not just think that this is Father Flanagan, you know, "There is no such thing as a bad boy." We've got a serious problem.

I mentioned to you about 1500 Mass. One of the most notorious gay bars in Washington is the Chesapeake bar. It's across from the convention center. That's where Yeoman Madsen was recruited by the Soviets. Yeoman Madsen would come out of the Pentagon, he would have classified documents inside his uniform, he would go to an apartment house, he would take off his uniform and be properly serviced by whoever -- whatever was required. The documents were photocopied. Satisfied, Madsen returned to the Pentagon, put the originals back in the files.

And we went along, fat, dumb and happy, thinking that these pieces of material were still secure and safe.

SPIVAK: Okay. On that note, let me just commend this book to you. This is called The New KGB, written by William R. Corson and Robert T. Crowley. And like I say, it's a very scholarly work.

Well, thank you, Dr. Corson, for coming in here and visiting with us. I don't know, I'm uncomfortable with the idea of 700 of those guys operating around here. There's not much I can do about it, though, is there?

CORSON: They might take you to lunch.

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SPIVAK: Wonderful.

CORSON: An agent of influence.

SPIVAK: I'll look forward to that.